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The Influence of the Spanish Civil War on George Orwell and his
Novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
(Bakalářská práce)

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Introduction

The thesis explores the influence of the Spanish Civil War on George Orwell, who came to Spain as a journalist but then decided to take part in the fight against Fascism, and gives insight into how this experience changed his opinions and how they reflect in his two famous novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The book *Homage to Catalonia*, the essays “Looking Back on the Spanish War” and “Spilling the Spanish Beans”, in which Orwell goes back to the conflict and describes his experiences from Barcelona and from the trenches, serve as primary sources for the thesis.

The first chapter presents a short description of the situation in Western Europe in 1930s. It deals with the Great Depression, its impact on people, on the European political scene, and the rise of Fascism in Germany and its subsequent effect on other countries, until the beginning of World War II in 1939. Then it describes the British literary scene of the decade – authors who sympathized with the Left and in their works reacted to the problems around them – the circle of poets connected with the figure of Wystan Hugh Auden, and George Orwell, a significant representative of the British prose of the thirties.

The second chapter is concerned with the Spanish Civil War which took place between 1936 and 1939. It sums up briefly the most important information about the conflict to introduce the reader to the topic, including the situation in Spain before the conflict, the reasons for the war, the characteristic of the individual camps that faced each other, the final result of the fights, and its consequences for the nation.

The third part narrows down the theme of the Spanish Civil War to George Orwell’s personal experience, examining the reasons for his arrival in Spain and his subsequent decision to participate in the fight against Fascism. It also discusses the objectivity of Orwell's account of the conflict.

The fourth chapter gives a detailed account of the individual aspects of the war which had an immediate impact on Orwell's opinions, and it relates these experiences to the two above mentioned novels, thus proving that the Spanish Civil War was a key moment for his future career.

1. The situation in Western Europe and the literary Left in Great Britain in 1930s

1.1 Western Europe in 1930s

The thirties in Western Europe were connected with some of the most relevant events in the history of the continent. It was the period between the world wars associated with the so-called Great Depression period.

The Great Depression period was a worldwide economic crisis which had an impact on all sectors – agriculture, industry, and trade – and was a very hard time for people throughout Europe. It originated in the United States on October 24, 1929 (“Black Thursday”) with the crash of the New York Stock Exchange, spread to Europe and other continents, and ended in the late 1930s, somewhere it lasted until the early 1940s. During World War I, the United States borrowed money needed for the war to European countries which then were not able to pay the money back and fell in debts. The crisis had the biggest impact on developed countries – for instance in Europe, Germany and Great Britain belonged to the states which were affected by it the most. There was not enough financial resources to develop industries, the prices of goods increased and, as a consequence, millions of people throughout Europe remained unemployed and lived in poverty. However, the crisis did not influence only economies of the individual states, but it had a significant impact on the European political scene too. As during the Great Depression, most of the society lived in very poor conditions (the crisis negatively influenced the lives of all social classes, chiefly the middle class which experienced the biggest financial decline), the dissatisfaction of people with the situation resulted in their support of extreme ideologies like Fascism.

Germany, as a state which lost World War I, had to pay enormous reparations to the victorious countries but did not have the money and the economic problems became so serious that there was the highest unemployment in Europe. This caused that many unemployed working-class and middle-class people decided to vote for the Hitler's far-right National Socialist German Workers' Party as he promised to create job opportunities for them. In 1933, it became the leading party of the German government. Hitler was appointed chancellor and under Hitler's rule, Germany

managed to improve its economic situation by reducing the number of unemployed people who found jobs in arms industry on which Germany started to concentrate.

Adolf Hitler believed that Germans were superior to all nations and were determined to rule the world, therefore, the attachment of other countries to German territory became his aim. He started to realize his plans in Central Europe first. In 1938, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, and France signed the Munich Agreement which enabled Germany to annex Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. In 1939, Germany got control of the rest of Czechoslovakia, declaring it the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This was something the other states did not expect and wanted Germany to guarantee that it would not invade Poland.

Great Britain and France adopted a policy of appeasement during the thirties, and decided not to intervene in German plans because they of course did not want to become its enemies, they were not prepared for the war as they had economic problems, knew they would lose it, and thus wanted to avoid a conflict with Germany. These countries were convinced that if Hitler succeeded in occupying the states in Central Europe as he planned, he would be satisfied and would not continue. However, when General Franco won the Spanish Civil War in 1939 with the help of arms provided by Germany and Italy, it strengthened Hitler's power and confirmed him in his feeling that he could succeed in occupying other states and spreading Fascism.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, breaking thus the promise Hitler made and, as a consequence, two days later, the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany. However, they remained inactive, none of them endeavoured to stop Hitler, and he continued invading other countries. As a result, at the end of the thirties, Western Europe also has to face Hitler's aggression and the countries enter World War II.

1.2 Literary Left in Great Britain in 1930s

Most writers were dissatisfied with the situation they and other people had to endure and began to use their books as a means of social protest. They sympathized with the poor and wanted to attract attention of the European society to the social injustice and poverty caused by the Great Depression period, and to the rise of Fascism which after Hitler's success in the elections of the early 1930s, was not only

a problem of Germany. They realized it also represented an imminent threat for other European countries, including Great Britain, and it was necessary to stop it.

The literary Left in 1930s was associated with the so-called Auden Circle, a group of poets including Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood, and W.H. Auden, the leading figure and at the same time the most famous representative of the group. The term was coined by scholars to designate 1930s British poets who sympathized with the Left-wing politics. They were influenced mainly by Karl Marx, a German philosopher, historian, revolutionary, economist, and political theorist who, together with Friedrich Engels introduced a new version of socialism in *The Communist Manifesto*. In this work published in 1848, they write about the evil of capitalism and their belief that later it would be replaced by socialism and then by communism. The poets, some of whom became members of the Communist party, were interested in the problems of their time and were dissatisfied with the situation the Great Depression period caused which is why their poems react to unemployment, social injustice, poverty. All these problems confirmed them in the opinion that only the Left could improve people's lives and bring justice. Most of them even took part in the Spanish Civil War and they warned of the dangers and the rise of Fascism in their verses, trying to make people see that it is necessary to stop this ideology and fight against its spreading to other countries. Because they wanted to appeal to wide audiences, they used rather simple language so that everyone could get their message.

Even though it is apparent from the themes of their poems that the poets believed their works could change something, later when Auden saw that nothing changed and World War II started, he concluded that poetry has not the power to make things different. This belief reflects in his poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" written in 1939 in which he states: "poetry makes nothing happen."¹

The English prose of the thirties was influenced primarily by the works of George Orwell who, unlike Auden, never stopped believing in the power of literature.

¹ W. H. Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," *The Academy of American Poets, Inc.* Accessed July 27, 2012 <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15544>>.

2. Spanish Civil War

A war always breaks out to achieve a specific goal, in the case of the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939 it was the dissatisfaction with the situation in the country. If we leaf through the pages of a book about the history of any nation, we always find out something about an important historical battle which unforgettably went down in history, often unfortunately due to terrible bloodshed. Just as the United States of America remember the American Civil War as being one of the most tragic incidents in the history of their nation, the war in Spain will also be kept in minds of people as a huge disaster during which too many innocent persons died. There were hundreds of thousands victims during the three years of the war and Franco's regime. But we can only estimate the number of people who lost their lives in this cruel chapter of world history. Even nowadays, historians cannot agree on the number of victims, their estimates differ a lot, but many of them write about approximately 500 000 dead in their books. In reality however, the numbers were much higher as many people are not included – those who starved to death, died of a war disease, or simply disappeared.²

Analysing all the factors which gave rise to the war in Spain is impossible as the situation was really complicated and today, not even historians can confidently agree on the reasons why the war started. Therefore, in this chapter, I will only briefly mention the main causes of the conflict.

Basically, the war was an inevitable outcome of a general crisis in Spain that started long before the conflict. In 1923, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, during which King Alfonso XIII remained the head of the monarchy, was established. Seven years later, Primo de Rivera resigned from his office, the king lost all support of the people and in 1931, the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed. Spaniards expected that after the years they had been suffering under Rivera's rule, their situation would change for the better. That was why the majority of them voted for the Republicans who then assumed power in the country and planned to carry out reforms and changes in Spain, turning it into a developed state. According to Chalupa, Manuel Azaña, by that time the Spanish Prime Minister, believed there were problems which prevented Spain from becoming a modern, developed country. They were the following: “underdeveloped agriculture, too politicized and at the

² Elena Castro Oury, *La II República y la guerra civil española* (Madrid: Akal Ed, 1993) 48.

same time ineffective army, the excessive power of the church (...) and regional separatism”, therefore, the reforms were supposed to free Spain from these problems.³ [my translation]

In 1936, the Socialists, Communists, and Left-wing Republicans won the elections, joining forces despite their disagreement about many things, and formed a new government under the name Popular Front. Manuel Azaña was elected President of the Republic. The government comprised of different political parties, the most powerful of them being UR (*Unión Republicana*, Republican Union), IR (*Izquierda Republicana*, Republican Left), PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), PCE (*Partido Comunista de España*, Spanish Communist Party), POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) which was an anti-Stalinist revolutionary communist party. The Popular Front was also supported by the Anarchists.

However, the main motive which was the source of the whole conflict, were huge social differences between people, resulting from poorly regulated agricultural system. The life of people in the cities was comparable to the contemporary one in Western Europe, on the contrary, rural areas were underdeveloped and those who lived there were poor and suffered from hunger.⁴ The opponents of the Republic did not agree with the government, they did not like the planned innovations and wanted to preserve traditional values, therefore, started to take steps to be able to form a new government which would do things differently.

Naturally, there were many people who, when they realized how many persons could die during the conflict and how destroyed Spain and their lives would be, did not support any of these groups and did not want any war in their country. However, as it follows from the previous paragraphs, the two hostile camps were the basis of the whole conflict. The opponents of the Republic, the Nationalists, were led by General Francisco Franco and supported by the Fascist leaders Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, Germany and Italy being the major suppliers of weapons to this camp. Franco's power was reinforced by the Carlists who wanted to restore the monarchy, and by the so-called Falange (a political party founded by Primo de Rivera which represented the Far-right) whose members under Franco's command

³ Jiří Chalupa, *Zápisky o válce občanské: studie o vybraných aspektech Španělské občanské války 1936-1939* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 2002) 13. (“zaostalé zemědělství, příliš zpolitizovanou a současně neakceschopnou armádu, nadměrný vliv církve (...) a regionální separatismus.”)

⁴ see Chalupa 14–15.

contributed to the atmosphere full of fear and violence. The wealthy classes of Spanish society sympathized with Franco, including the Church and landowners. The Republicans, on the other hand, received weapons mainly from the Soviet Union and many volunteers from around the world came to fight on their side, joining the International Brigades. The Republicans were supported by middle classes, anarchists, and poor people living in rural areas.

On the one side, the Nationalists united under Franco's leadership did everything possible to achieve their goal and had better equipment than the Republicans. On the other, there was the government which because of the disagreement between its individual political groups started to fall apart as the parties concentrated too much on the destruction of their political enemies and thus made it easier for Franco to win the war.

When the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939 with the conquest of Madrid, Franco's dictatorship was established, characterized by censorship, no political liberty – there was only a single political party, economic isolation from other countries, persecution of the enemies of the regime – executions, torturing, locking up in prisons, and until the end of World War II also imprisonments in concentration camps. It is important to note that even though his rule showed some signs of Fascism, he is not considered to be Fascist by historians. “Franco was not a fascist. There is an element of revolutionary politics in fascism, of wanting to provoke a dramatic change in society. That was not Franco's intention: on the contrary, he wanted to preserve Spain from change”.⁵ The dictatorship did not end until Franco's death in 1975 when Juan Carlos I was proclaimed King and Spain made transition to democracy.

As was mentioned above, not only Spaniards fought in the war. More than 40 000 volunteers from other countries stood by their side. Most of them were from France or Great Britain, but others came from Italy, Poland, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the United States, and many other states. The war did not only influence the lives of ordinary people, it was also connected with the fate of many famous representatives of world literature. Federico García Lorca, a well-known Spanish poet and playwright, was shot by the Fascists right at the beginning of the war, Ernest Hemingway worked in Spain as a journalist and this experience was the source of

⁵ Filipe Ribeiro De Menezes, *Franco and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 87.

inspiration for his war novels. And last but not least, George Orwell in whose case the war had a strong influence on his political thinking and, therefore, also on his later novels which became highly successful all around the world.

3. George Orwell in the Spanish Civil War

Before the exploration of the effect of the war on George Orwell and his works, it is worth mentioning something about him and the war in general. It is necessary to attempt to find out why he decided to participate in the war and how accurate his account is in order to understand his view of the conflict as a whole.

3.1 Reasons for participation in the war

In the book *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell mentions that he came to Spain as a journalist but after his arrival, he decided to join the militia, because “at that time and in that atmosphere it seemed the only conceivable thing to do.”⁶ When he arrived in Barcelona and saw what was happening around him, he fully realized Fascism represents a serious threat and should be stopped from spreading to another European state. It was a unique opportunity to fight against this ideology. The situation Orwell witnessed evoked a strong desire in him to take part in a struggle against, at first glance, obvious evil and for better future of Spain which was in his and other people's eyes represented by Republican democracy. But at the same time he, as well as other authors who came to Spain as volunteers, was aware of the fact that it could become very dangerous for other nations too. Therefore, it was necessary to defeat it in Spain to show Hitler and other Fascist that there is no place for such an ideology in Europe. Orwell “believed that human conditions could be improved through political action, and now by fighting Fascism in Spain.”⁷ And thus, when he had the opportunity to participate in the rescue of a nation, although it was not his own, he did not hesitate to put his life in jeopardy and make a sacrifice for the good of others. Back then, however, he did not know how decisive this experience would be for his future life and work, and that it would completely change his previous convictions. “Orwell's experiences in Spain marked the crucial turning-point in his political beliefs.”⁸

⁶ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 2.

⁷ Gordon Bowker, *George Orwell* (London: Abacus, 2003) 202.

⁸ Jeffrey Meyers, *George Orwell: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1975) 14.

3.2 Orwell's objectivity

After the day Orwell decided to participate in the war and joined the POUM militia, the Lenin Barracks in Barcelona became his second home, where he as well as other men in the militia, were supposed to undergo a military training for the front. Barcelona, being the capital of Catalonia, played one of the key roles in the whole conflict. However, there were also battles in trenches outside Barcelona, in the case of Orwell it was the area of the Alcubierre mountain range and the city of Huesca which both lie in the autonomous community of Aragon about 300 km from Barcelona.

Mentioning the exact places of Orwell's stay is important to emphasize that his experience can differ from what is written in most books or articles concerned with the Spanish Civil War. They are usually compelling accounts of the war in general, but they do not depict what was happening in every part of Spain and the situation, of course, differed from place to place. Therefore, Orwell's work should not be seen as a typical portrayal of the Spanish Civil War. Moreover, we cannot rely on the correctness of his account of the war and events because as Orwell admits, it is not easy to write objectively in the time of war propaganda, therefore, any report about the Spanish Civil War, including his one, may contain false information.

I believe that on such an issue as this no one is or can be completely truthful. (...) [C]onsciously or unconsciously everyone writes as a partisan. (...) [B]eware of my partisanship, my mistakes of fact and the distortion inevitably caused by my having seen only one corner of events.⁹

It is obvious that if we have some beliefs, we consider them to be right, and so did Orwell. Wherever the truth lies, the author formed his opinions on the basis of his personal experiences and ideals and that is what matters in this thesis.

Even though Orwell points out there is a possibility his account of the events might not be objective, I decided to explore his description of the conflict to learn about a different and more detailed depiction of the conflict from the one described in most publications about the Spanish Civil War. Moreover, I wanted to explore specifically how this conflict influenced Orwell's works and find out what went

⁹ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 186.

through the mind of a famous British author when he was a foreigner in a country whose politics he knew nothing about.

4. Influence of war on later works

Nowadays, George Orwell belongs to the most well-known political writers of the twentieth century. Although almost everybody knows his famous novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and he or she probably heard or read about his participation in the Spanish Civil War, I think that the majority of people do not know how important this experience was for the development of his opinions reflected in the two above mentioned novels. In the following pages, I am going to examine the individual aspects of the war which I believe shaped his personality and turned him into the man we know today from his books, a man with a unique ability to think about problems which concern all people, regardless of age, gender, or nationality.

4.1 Situation of civilians

The situation of ordinary people was one of the most important things that influenced Orwell in shaping his opinions. The Spanish Civil War was not the first opportunity to encounter misery and injustice, he had already experienced both of these in Burma, Paris, or London, as he described in his works *Burmese Days* and *Down and Out in Paris and London*. However, the division of society in Spain and the problems associated with it undoubtedly affected his way of thinking too.

As soon as Orwell arrived in Barcelona, everything seemed idyllic because, as he writes in *Homage to Catalonia*, during the time when Barcelona was controlled by the working class, it looked like everybody was equal because when addressing someone, people did not use formal greetings. “Servile and even ceremonial forms of speech had temporarily disappeared. Nobody said ‘*Señor*’ or ‘*Don*’ or even ‘*Usted*’; everyone called everyone else ‘*Comrade*’ and ‘*Thou*’, and said ‘*Salud!*’ instead of ‘*Buenos días*’.”¹⁰ Furthermore, the author states that although there were shortages of many products, “the people were contented and hopeful. There was no unemployment, and the price of living was still extremely low.”¹¹ However, he then adds that he soon found out that the so-called equality and happiness were only apparent, when he says: “I did not realise that great numbers of well-to-do bourgeois

¹⁰ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 3.

¹¹ Orwell 4.

were simply lying low and disguising themselves as proletarians for the time being.”¹² “There must have been many thousands of people who deliberately put on overalls and shouted revolutionary slogans as a way of saving their skins.”¹³ They chose to submit to the rules they were expected to follow, and wait. Moreover, Orwell refers to the fact that while ordinary people did not have a chance to buy bread because there was a lack of it, in the POUM barracks, where the militiamen were staying, “there was frightful wastage of food, especially bread”, which was “thrown away at every meal”.¹⁴ It is obvious that this situation had nothing to do with absolute equality. It suggests that in reality, a certain part of the population was considered to be more important, more privileged than the other one. Unsurprisingly, the so-called equality in Barcelona only lasted a few months and everything went back to the original state. On the one hand, there were the “rich people wolfing expensive meals”, on the other, the working class men and people without financial resources who were rather concerned about being able to afford to buy food, and “there were recurrent shortages of this and that, which, of course, always hit the poor rather than the rich.”¹⁵

But at the front it was different. He had a chance to be a part of a community in which people treated each other as equals, regardless of their rank. He finally proved himself that a society without class differences, in which no one is seen as superior, was not only a dream, but that one day it could actually be possible to realize it.

It was here that those few months in the militia were valuable to me. For the Spanish militias, while they lasted, were a sort of microcosm of a classless society. In that community where no one was on the make, where there was a shortage of everything but no privilege and no boot-licking, one got, perhaps, a crude forecast of what the opening stages of Socialism might be like. And, after all, instead of disillusioning me it deeply attracted me.

¹² George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 3.

¹³ Orwell 93.

¹⁴ Orwell 6.

¹⁵ Orwell 93.

The effect was to make my desire to see Socialism established much more actual than it had been before.¹⁶

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm*, Orwell shows what it is like to live in a community ruled by injustice. He warns of the dangers of a society dominated by inequality in which some people have many privileges, while others have to be content with little, submit to the authority. They are seen as inferior and are exploited by those in power.

The first of the above mentioned novels provides an insight into a society composed of three classes of which only the upper class leads a happy life. This elite, the Inner Party, dictates how others should live, what they can and cannot do, and adjust all rules to their own benefit. The middle (the Outer Party) and lower (the Proles) classes suffer under the rule of those in power, they do not have the same opportunities and conditions for life as the people above them. The Proles live in poverty, but at least, they are free to live their ordinary lives, think whatever they want, as “they can be granted intellectual liberty because they have no intellect.”¹⁷ And even though it seems the middle class must lead satisfactory lives in comparison with the previously mentioned one, the opposite is true. “A Party member lives from birth to death under the eye of the Thought Police”¹⁸, “is expected to have no private emotions”.¹⁹ Moreover, the Inner Party has a free access to any goods, but others can only buy food of poor quality which is strictly rationed.

In *Animal Farm*, he explores a very similar situation. Even though the protagonists are not people, and there is not the common division into various classes typical for humans (the middle class is missing), the differences between the exploiters and the exploited are still present. The animals believe their lives are full of misery and injustice. That is why they drive out the owners of the farm. As soon as they succeed, they become confident that the injustice and the cruel exploitation are over and there is a bright future ahead. But some of them come to realize they could have power over others and they become new despots of the farm. All the other animals work hard, do what pigs order them, but instead of the improvement of

¹⁶ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 84.

¹⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 219.

¹⁸ Orwell 219.

¹⁹ Orwell 220.

their conditions, their rations are “reduced, except those of the pigs and the dogs.”²⁰ When the pigs gain power, they leave their former friends behind, seeing themselves as more intelligent animals that should have more privileges, changing thus the Commandments from seven into a single one: "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS."²¹

Orwell emphasizes that when somebody has control over others, it changes him or her into a cruel person who starts to exploit them and, as a consequence, there are always people sentenced to miserable lives whose situation does not correspond to what they deserve. Orwell attempts to point out that in a hierarchical society the poorer ones are always affected by the decisions of the people in power who do not care about others, are only interested in their own happiness, and would do anything to reinforce their superiority. Even though ordinary people work hard, they often struggle for survival, while the rich do not experience such difficulties, and enjoy the benefits others can only dream of. Therefore, he believed all people should be equal. In his eyes, Socialism was a system which would ensure peace and happiness for humanity.

There is his implicit and constant conviction that the real value of the socialist movement is that it constitutes a mobilization of the idea of equality. Calls for “liberty,” “justice,” and “decency,” for all their vagueness, do signify an intent to improve the quality of life, to move away from inequality wherein privilege takes precedence over ability.²²

4.2 Life of men in militia

After joining the POUM militia and finding out what state it was in and how the fights went, Orwell was shocked because it was something he did not expect. The conditions he witnessed were far from what he had imagined. He believed he could contribute to radical changes but his enthusiasm was immediately replaced by

²⁰ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 66.

²¹ Orwell 81.

²² Ian Slater, *Orwell: The Road to Airstrip One* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) 87.

feelings of despair. “Now that I had seen the front I was profoundly disgusted. They called this war! And we were hardly even in touch with the enemy!”²³ “At first sight the state of affairs at the front horrified me. How on earth could the war be won by an army of this type?”²⁴ Orwell points out that the vast majority of the recruits were “boys of sixteen or seventeen (...) full of revolutionary ardour but completely ignorant of the meaning of war.”²⁵ They were so young and full of enthusiasm that they did not realize they could rather hurt somebody than help. Because of the ambitions of adults, they found themselves in a dangerous “game” which could tragically change their own or other people's lives. Nevertheless, they decided to be a part of it without realizing the possible consequences.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell is interested in what happens when adults pass on their cruelty to the innocent. He writes about children who do not hesitate to satisfy the requirements of Big Brother. “The children (...) were systematically turned against their parents and taught to spy on them and report their deviations.”²⁶ They lack the ability to differentiate between what is moral and what is not, the common sense which could tell them that the denouncement of their parents' bad behaviour is wrong. In the end, they themselves become affected by their actions the most because they lose those who love them even though they do not realize it. It is easy to convince them to do what the Party wants. The cruelty of its members causes that the children become heartless creatures who do not care about others. This is apparent from a boy's behaviour towards the protagonist who yells at him: “I'll shoot you, I'll vaporize you, I'll send you to the salt mines!”²⁷ The boy has no respect for Winston, a person he has never met before, he is full of hatred as the consequence of the bad influence of the Party.

Taking part in the war and being away from the everyday, ordinary life in a civilized world he got used to for example in Great Britain, was one of the most important parts of the whole experience. The struggle for survival becomes the only thing you actually care about, and you realize that the values of your life like “snobbishness, money-grubbing, fear of the boss, etc.” which were the centre of your

²³ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 21.

²⁴ Orwell 26-27 .

²⁵ Orwell 7.

²⁶ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 140.

²⁷ Orwell 25.

attention, all of a sudden disappear and are no longer important.²⁸ The months he spent in the dirty trenches in discomfort, cold, in the fear of being wounded showed him that people who do not have to put up with difficult situations and are used to comfortable life are selfish, interested in nothing but money, and do not show consideration for others. They will constantly attempt to gain more and more comfort and wealth for themselves. On the other hand, people whose life is not easy care for the good of others and, furthermore, they are content with little.

In *Animal Farm*, the pigs who never do any dirty jobs and always have enough food, more and more reduce the portions of other animals, and increase their own. They do not think about others who “[work] like slaves”²⁹, “[are] always cold, and usually hungry as well”³⁰, but only are concerned with their own benefit. The other animals think about the good of the whole farm, do not want any privileges in return for the toil, while the pigs enjoy the comfort of human life like beds, clothes...

Orwell came to know that selfishness is one of the key factors that harm society. Joshi states that Orwell emphasizes in his novels that “it is not system but the morality of the individual which determines the humanness of the social system, and the greatest of enemy of man has been his (...) selfishness.”³¹

The difficult times in the war taught Orwell that even though a person encounters many obstacles when trying to fight for his dreams, it is important not to give up and keep a strong will as long as there is some possibility of achieving the desired goal. This is one of the messages he wanted to convey to the next generations. “Never give up. That's one of the real lessons of his work.”³² One should never surrender, continue in the effort, and have faith that he or she will succeed in the end. It is also crucial not to give up on your ideals in order to show yourself and others that you have some self-esteem. You should have a clear conscience that you did everything you could when facing a difficult situation, and did not let your enemy win easily without a fight. Because if you surrender, you will end up with nothing good anyway so why not endeavour to struggle until the end? Orwell writes in his essay “Looking back on the Spanish War”: “War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil. Those who

²⁸ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 83.

²⁹ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 36.

³⁰ Orwell 44.

³¹ Arun Joshi, *Fictional Styles Of George Orwell* (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2004) 5.

³² John Rodden, *Every Intellectual's Big Brother: George Orwell's Literary Siblings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006) 122.

take the sword perish by the sword, and those who don't take the sword perish by smelly diseases.”³³ It is thus apparent that he believed that sticking to your opinions and fighting for them despite the danger of possible death is worth it. People should not let their enemies win when they do not agree with their bad intentions because then the life would be full of suffering which has nothing to do with happiness. But it is important to say that although on the one hand, according to Orwell, in many situations it is important not to surrender: “There are occasions when it pays better to fight and be beaten than not to fight at all.”³⁴ On the other, he also believed, as will be examined later, that sometimes we find ourselves in a situation in which the effort is useless and can be rather harmful.

This theme occurs in both of the discussed novels. In *Animal Farm*, animals are determined to do anything to accomplish their goal, drive people out of the farm, accompanied by the strong will to establish their own system of rules and start a new life in which they could live in peace. Old Major, one of the farm boars, encourages the other animals: “Remember, comrades, your resolution must never falter. No argument must lead you astray. (...) All men are enemies.”³⁵ They stick together and in the end really manage to make their dream come true and defeat humans who have had power over them.

Winston Smith, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who has to put up with miserable conditions for life in a land under the control of Big Brother, does not give up and struggles for his happiness as long as possible. Even though everything that could make people feel good is prohibited, he finds love and attempts to reveal the truth and the secrets the Party led by Big Brother hides. “The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. (...) They were wrong and he was right. The obvious, the silly and true had got to be defended. Truisms are true, hold on to that.”³⁶ Even though he knows that one day he will be given away, he fights for his rights as long as he is free in thinking and knows he could contribute to the doom of the Party. “I don't imagine that we can alter anything in our own lifetime. But one can imagine little knots of resistance springing up here and there (...) leaving a few

³³ George Orwell, "Looking Back on the Spanish War," *George Orwell*. Accessed April 3, 2012 <http://www.george-orwell.org/Looking_Back_On_The_Spanish_War/0.html>.

³⁴ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 219.

³⁵ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 5.

³⁶ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 84.

records behind, so that the next generation can carry on where we leave off.”³⁷ However, the situation becomes different when a person is unable to think clearly, for example when suffering from severe pain, and knows that it is over, that there is nothing he or she could do, is defeated. When Winston is being tortured by the members of the Inner Party, naturally, the pain is so unbearable that he has to let them win and confess everything, even crimes he did not commit. “He became simply a mouth that uttered, a hand that signed, whatever was demanded of him.”³⁸ He knew that there is no point in fighting against the Party anymore. He was alone in the hands of his enemies who could hurt or kill him anytime they wanted. Orwell shows that in a situation when nothing can be done, undergoing suffering is completely useless. As he wrote in the novel: “Never, for any reason on earth, could you wish for an increase of pain. Of pain you could wish only one thing: that it should stop. Nothing in the world was so bad as physical pain. In the face of pain there are no heroes”.³⁹

4.3 Wound

Orwell was wounded after several days at the front at Huesca. His injury was quite serious, “[n]o one I met at this time (...) failed to assure me that a man who is hit through the neck and survives it is the luckiest creature alive”⁴⁰, which helped him realize the true value of life, just as to any person who finds him/herself close to death. Orwell describes: “There must have been about two minutes during which I assumed that I was killed.”⁴¹ Although we all consider our life important, as long as there is no danger we are going to lose it, we rather take each day for granted. He realized how little it takes to lose your life. Therefore, when he found himself face to face with death, he felt “a violent resentment at having to leave this world which, when all [was] said and done, [suited] [him] so well.”⁴²

But there was also something good about it for Orwell. Thanks to his stay in a hospital, he could witness what conditions there were in the medical facilities for the

³⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 162-163.

³⁸ Orwell 254.

³⁹ Orwell 251.

⁴⁰ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 147.

⁴¹ Orwell 138-139.

⁴² Orwell 139.

treatment of all the injured men. According to Orwell, the conditions in hospitals near fronts in Spain were not very good. Injured men were usually taken to a hospital where somebody would really take care of them after waiting for some time in casualty clearing-stations where “they were getting no treatment except an occasional clean bandage, sometimes not even that.(...) The other fault was the lack of competent nurses.”⁴³. The leaders of Spain did not ensure sufficient medical care for the men who fought for democracy. They did not mind that after everything they had been through in the trenches, the men suffered from pain and no one helped them. When we realize the government decided to betray the POUM and arrest people, including the militiamen (as will be discussed in the following chapter), and when we consider the soldiers had not enough arms to fight and protect their lives when “the Assault Guards and Carabineros, who were not intended for the front at all, were better armed and far better clad” than the militiamen⁴⁴, it is obvious that they were not interested in the fate of the soldiers. The people in the head of the country were indifferent to the misery of these heroes. This enabled Orwell to discover the true face of the government. Not only they were indifferent to the issue of equality, but they also did not care for the health of the men who were risking their lives for the Republic.

In both novels, Orwell managed to draw a comparison between the attitude of the ordinary people and those in power to a human life. In *Animal Farm*, he explores the cruelty of the pigs who sell Boxer, a horse who is the most hard-working animal, to the slaughter without mercy, claiming he was “bought by the veterinary surgeon”⁴⁵. On the other hand, the other animals from the farm are very friendly to each other and when they see the van that is taking Boxer away, they want to help him. And when the pigs without hesitation execute every animal that committed a crime, the rest of the animals are “shaken and miserable.”⁴⁶

The members of the Inner Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* get rid of inconvenient people by vaporizing them which means they let them disappear without a trace. “Your one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished, annihilated”⁴⁷. Those in power do not consider the life of an individual important, it

⁴³ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 142-143.

⁴⁴ Orwell 125.

⁴⁵ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 74.

⁴⁶ Orwell 51.

⁴⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 21.

is worthless for them, and kill anybody anytime they want. Orwell emphasizes that they do not appreciate human life, believe they can do whatever they like and decide about other people's future just because they feel they are superior and untouchable.

4.4 Political situation

At the beginning of the war, Orwell believed that taking part in the fights was very important, and that no matter which party he would choose to join, he could not go wrong because the fact that it was trying to stop Fascism was the most decisive factor. After his arrival in Spain, he started to perceive Fascism as a serious threat, and he wanted to help Spaniards make the first step to a better future. He felt that it was necessary to stop the spreading Fascism and struggle for democracy. “When I came to Spain, (...) I was not only uninterested in the political situation but unaware of it. (...) If you had asked me why I had joined the militia I should have answered: ‘To fight against Fascism’”.⁴⁸ Knowing that they wanted to achieve the same goal was the crucial thing which attracted him.

This opinion, however, soon changed, and he started to see that politics plays a key role in the conflict. His everyday confrontation with reality confirmed him in the conflict being mainly a political farce. He writes that when newspapers wrote about the common objective of everyone involved, it was only “to prevent people from grasping the real nature of the struggle.”⁴⁹ As he discovered, “everyone, however unwillingly, took sides sooner or later” because “one's own destiny was involved. As a militiaman one was a soldier against Franco, but one was also a pawn in an enormous struggle (...) between two political theories.”⁵⁰ The government stopped being mutually loyal, and the Communists decided to destroy the parties which did not share the same opinions, therefore, just because “the POUM was for immediate revolution, the Communists not”⁵¹, they started to spread lies about the party in order to cause its fall. “The POUM was declared to be no more than a gang of disguised Fascists, in the pay of Franco and Hitler”.⁵² They made enemies out of the men who

⁴⁸ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 188.

⁴⁹ Orwell 189.

⁵⁰ Orwell 189.

⁵¹ Orwell 207.

⁵² Orwell 207.

were ready to fight for the Republic, instead of supporting them. Although their attitudes to various aspects of the war differed, Orwell could not understand how the Communist Party could betray the men who deliberately risked their lives for the good of the nation.

POUM was prohibited and “the Communist-controlled secret police acted on the assumption that all were guilty alike and arrested everyone connected with the POUM”⁵³. It was a time when Orwell experienced what it is like to live in the atmosphere full of suspicion and fear. People knew the police were looking for them and had to hide to save themselves, including Orwell, and they felt no one could be trusted. “You had all the while a hateful feeling that someone hitherto your friend might be denouncing you to the police.”⁵⁴ He was successful in avoiding imprisonment but lots of other people and many Orwell's friends were not so lucky. As a former member of the militia, he knew many men who ended up in prison. That was why he could find out that the environment in which they were forced to live in prisons was terrible and humiliating. Although these people were innocent, they had to endure cruel treatment just because there was an authority that falsely accused them. “The jails were places that could only be described as dungeons. (...) People were penned together in small rooms (...) and they were fed on a filthy and insufficient diet”⁵⁵. Freedom and rights of citizens were suppressed and that had nothing in common with a better future. This meaningless fight against innocent men who did nothing wrong, who only wanted to fight for democracy changed Orwell's attitude to the Spanish Civil War. He started to realize that it was a mistake to ignore the political side of the conflict, that this should have been one of the first things to think about.

Bowker wrote that this experience gave Orwell “a vision of what libertarian socialism was like in practice.”⁵⁶ Such liberty of individuals who can use their power over others as they like presented something he started to be scared of. He slowly found out that Communism could represent a similar threat as Franco's regime itself, and therefore became its arch-enemy, fighting every possible way to make people aware of it and attempt to stop it from spreading its practices. He soon discovered another ideology to believe in. He started to have faith in democratic socialism, an

⁵³ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 241-242.

⁵⁴ Orwell 128-129.

⁵⁵ Orwell 170-171.

⁵⁶ Gordon Bowker, *George Orwell* (London: Abacus, 2003) 225.

ideology in which no one has the power to control others. In the essay “Why I Write” written in 1946, Orwell admitted: “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it.”⁵⁷ He did not specify how he understood it but taking into consideration his war experience, there is no doubt that he saw it as an ideology based on freedom, not only the physical one but also the freedom of speech and conscience, an ideology in which no one has the right to rule others by the use of terror, and on equality among people.

His anti-totalitarian views mainly reflect in the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Individuals suffer under the rule of the authority represented by Big Brother. They are controlled and oppressed by the Inner Party. People have to live in fear, they suspect others around them that they could denounce them to Big Brother for not obeying his rules. The suffering of Orwell's fellow militiamen in prisons inspired him in choosing prison as one of the settings in the novel. All those who sin against the Party's policy are taken into jail, including the protagonist. These people are also innocent, even the members of the Party believe it. They know the persons do not commit thoughtcrimes intentionally but believe it is rather something like a disease. As O'Brien, the member of the Inner Party, tells Winston: “You are mentally deranged. (...) Fortunately it is curable.”⁵⁸ But still they do not mind torturing people and they easily justify their own crimes as they know they can control others. He shows how these people do not stop at anything when attempting to gain power.

It is very interesting how Orwell describes what was going on in his mind when he came back to England. Immediately after the war, he could draw comparison between two completely different worlds. As he was still full of impressions from Spain, he could see how when people live in peace, they get used to it very easily, forget about problems which do not concern them. When there are political conflicts, wars, natural disasters in other countries, they do not care because it happens somewhere far away. But politics is a very powerful force that connects people all around the world. They should not think that if there are wars in another part of the world, that it is only a problem of the countries involved. They should not be

⁵⁷ George Orwell, “Why I Write,” *The Literature Network*. Accessed April 3, 2012<<http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/897/>>.

⁵⁸ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 258.

indifferent, but interested in what happens around them. Because one they the war could come to England or any other peaceful country too.

“It is difficult (...) to believe that anything is really happening anywhere. Earthquakes in Japan, famines in China, revolutions in Mexico? Don't worry, the milk will be on the doorstep tomorrow morning, the New Statesman will come out on Friday. (...) Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood: (...) the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policemen — all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs.”⁵⁹

He realized that just as quickly as Fascism came to Spain, it or other undemocratic regimes could continue spreading to other countries, and people should be more concerned with the dangers certain regimes represent. Even though for the time being they are far away from them, people are never safe as long as these systems exist.

4.5 Foreign language

After the arrival on the Iberian Peninsula, George Orwell could not speak Spanish well, he only knew several basic phrases, therefore, “the only way [he] could get along was to carry everywhere a small dictionary”⁶⁰. But as he admitted, the whole situation was much more complicated for him as in the region where he operated, when his “companions spoke to one another they generally spoke in Catalan.”⁶¹ It is a dialect which is different from Spanish in many aspects, and for that reason neither people who learn to speak Spanish fluently understand it. This fact often kept him from comprehension of others. Such circumstances are a source of misunderstanding when a person can easily misinterpret another person's words. This experience helped him realize that if everyone around us uses a foreign language, it is practically the same as if we could neither read nor speak. It was not so easy to become fully aware of this fact when he was living in the countries where he did not have

⁵⁹ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 187.

⁶⁰ Orwell 9-10.

⁶¹ Orwell 9.

problems with making himself understood, or in places where it was not essential to comprehend what was going on around him. But in the Spanish Civil War, it was different and a good understanding of the language was crucial.

In Spain, Orwell came to know that not understanding others is actually a big handicap, especially in war. You need to be able to communicate with everyone around you when you are in a battle, so that you can warn them of danger. Sometimes it may be a matter of life and death. Orwell had the opportunity to experience these feelings when, in one moment, he saw several of his men approaching a trench which “led to the other Fascist position and – if they got there – to certain death”, and he “ran after them, trying to think of the Spanish for 'retire'; finally [he] shouted, 'Atrás! Atrás!’”, and that saved them⁶².

But Orwell realized there are other serious problems it may cause apart from the possibility of facing death. He never could have imagined how easy it is to take advantage of somebody's ignorance. If you are not able to read a text and cannot understand, people do not hesitate to cheat you to benefit from the lack of your knowledge. But he and other men from abroad were not the only ones who had to struggle with their inability to understand. As a matter of fact, yet in the times of the war, a high percentage of Spaniards were illiterate, mainly peasants, women, and the working classes (in 1931, the illiteracy in Spain ranged from a quarter to a half of the population, depending on the region⁶³, we can thus assume that in the time of the Spanish Civil War, the percentage was very similar). Orwell mentions how he and his colleagues had the opportunity to meet Andalusians and describes how Catalans “professed to look down on [them] as a race of semi-savages”, and he was quite surprised that they could not read and did not know which party they supported.⁶⁴ Encountering illiterate people was something he did not expect, and it made him think not only about the problems with foreign language, but also about illiteracy, at first sight two different things, but in the case of taking advantage of someone's ignorance, these two “handicaps” have a lot in common.

These findings supported one of the central ideas of the novel *Animal Farm* in which some of the animals cannot read and trust the pigs, their leaders, who write the Seven Commandments. However, because of the animals' inability to read the text,

⁶² George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 75.

⁶³ see Antony Beevor, *Španělská občanská válka* (Plzeň: Jiří Ševčík, 2004) 30.

⁶⁴ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 80.

some of them decide to learn the Commandments by heart, and even though the animals later start to take reading lessons, most of them do not manage to learn to read, they only remember several letters of the alphabet. As a consequence, they do not know that in reality, the pigs change its content for their own benefit. Even though the text seems a little bit different to them, the animals believe that their memory does not serve them well and that they simply do not remember it. “They had thought that the Fifth Commandment was ‘No animal shall drink alcohol’, but there were two words that they had forgotten. Actually the Commandment read: ‘No animal shall drink alcohol *to excess*.’”⁶⁵ Orwell proves that, on the one hand, language is one of the best human achievements, on the other however, it can be considered a weakness because it can be very easily abused.

Nineteen Eighty-Four reflects the use of language as a means to control people. They are forced to speak in so-called Newspeak which only has a limited vocabulary, enabling thus those in power to prevent a person from talking and thinking about things the Party does not want them to. “The whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought”. “Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller.”⁶⁶

Orwell shows that the less you can say, the more difficult it is to express your opinions and it is easier for others to take advantage of your handicap for their own benefit.

4.6 Press

During his stay in Spain, it was for the first time that Orwell had the opportunity to reveal the true nature of the Communist press. He took part in the actions on which the journalists reported, therefore, he could compare reality with what was written in the newspapers. Orwell claims in his work that when he read foreign newspapers, he found out that the events he personally witnessed were depicted in a completely different way. They did not correspond to reality, to what he saw.

In “Looking Back on the Spanish War”, he openly reveals the nature of Communist articles, not hesitating to admit that they were actually full of lies.

⁶⁵ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 65.

⁶⁶ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 55.

Early in life I have noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper, but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts. (. . .) I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. (...) I saw, in fact, history being written not in terms of what happened but of what ought to have happened according to various 'party lines'.⁶⁷

Even though nowadays, we are familiar with these practices, back in the thirties, he was disillusioned with the fact that journalists could make anything up, and the information was considered to be true. The Communist account of conflicts and events was “the most widely accepted one.”⁶⁸ Because the Communist newspapers were published all around the world, the versions of events released in Spain were then reprinted in other countries, and false information spread with the speed of light. But what about all those who were defamed in the articles? They must have disagreed with the lies and react to them, present their opinion on what really happened, right? But it was not possible. “The reason why one-sided version has been accepted is simply that the Spanish revolutionary parties have no footing in the foreign press.”⁶⁹

As Orwell states, the reports were “consciously aimed at a public ignorant of the facts and [had] no other purpose than to work up prejudice.”⁷⁰ The authors of newspaper reports could make up anything they wanted, modify any data to anybody's advantage, and present it as truth. That is why Communists enjoyed such overwhelming support. The press was something like a weapon in their hands, with the help of which they could control the masses of people. Rosenstone expresses an opinion on the Communist press, pointing out that all the articles concerning the situation in Spain “served the dual function of reporting events and creating enthusiasm for the Loyalist government.”⁷¹ All the people at the forefront of the country, of course, needed the support of the citizens, and persuading them to stand

⁶⁷ George Orwell, "Looking Back on the Spanish War," *George Orwell*. Accessed April 3, 2012 <http://www.george-orwell.org/Looking_Back_On_The_Spanish_War/0.html>.

⁶⁸ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 227.

⁶⁹ Orwell 226.

⁷⁰ Orwell 235.

⁷¹ Robert A. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: the Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (Transaction Publisher, 2009) 92.

by the government was much easier when they did anything to look good in the eyes of the public.

In the book *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell supports his assertions that the Communist newspaper reports contradicted each other or that they were completely made up with excerpts from articles he read. To prove his claims, a short report he published in his work is cited below. He quotes an article published in the Communist newspaper *Daily Worker* in Great Britain about the POUM and its use of arms during a conflict:

There were actually all sorts of arms used by them in the outrage. There were the arms which they have been stealing for months past, and hidden, and there were arms such as tanks, which they stole from the barracks just at the beginning of the rising. It is clear that scores of machine-guns and several thousand rifles are still in their possession.⁷²

But in fact, Orwell points out throughout the book that there was a lack of weapons in the POUM militia, therefore, he comments on the article with a touch of irony, stating that it is a mystery then, that when the militia ceased to exist, all these weapons never appeared, “especially the tanks and field-guns, which are not the kind of thing that can be hidden up the chimney.”⁷³

When finding out how the Communists treated information and attempted to influence people's opinions, how they intentionally invented lies about the situation in Spain when they had no idea about what was going on in the dirty trenches – “nearly all the newspaper accounts (...) were manufactured by journalists at a distance, and were not only inaccurate in the facts but intentionally misleading.”⁷⁴ – he started to be aware of the evil they represented. Because he realized that it was an imminent threat for the future, he used it as one of the main themes of his future works. The consciousness that anybody can basically take control over other people's thoughts and minds by spreading untruthful information evoked the feelings of horror and despair in him. People often did not realize how dangerous this may be, but Orwell managed to draw the consequences from these practices right away. In

⁷² George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 233.

⁷³ Orwell 233–234.

⁷⁴ Orwell 130-131.

"Looking Back on the Spanish War", he warns of a "nightmare world in which the Leader, or some ruling clique, controls not only the future but *the past*. If the Leader says of such and such an event, 'It never happened' – well, it never happened", and then he adds: "This prospect frightens me much more than bombs".⁷⁵ We can assume that making people aware of such evil intentions was the only thing he could do to stave off this threat. And his works were the best way how he, as a writer and journalist, could achieve it. He could address the public, help every individual person realize how far the power over people's minds could go, and endeavour to prevent this dreadful scenario from happening in the future, from becoming a part of our everyday lives.

This subject belongs to the main themes of Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which the author explores the idea of the power over people's minds by means of intentionally changed and destroyed information and documents about historical events. Each individual and the future generations are supposed to get to know only what suits the Party's policy. Then everyone, including the Party's members, has to believe no change has ever happened. "The [most] important reason for the readjustment of the past is the need to safeguard the infallibility of the Party. (...) [N]o change in doctrine or political alignment can ever be admitted. For to change one's mind, or even one's policy, is a confession of weakness."⁷⁶ The people in the novel forget about what really happened in the past and only remember the present, contributing thus to the consolidation of the Party's power. As a consequence, Oceania is full of loyal and obedient persons who would never oppose to those above them, and only think the best of them. The lives of the inhabitants are very similar to those of machines that are only able to think about what others want them to. And because they have no emotions, they cannot enjoy any pleasures life offers.

4.7 Human nature

At the end of *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell wrote, "the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings."⁷⁷ Spain was

⁷⁵ George Orwell, "Looking Back on the Spanish War," George Orwell. Accessed April 3, 2012 <http://www.george-orwell.org/Looking_Back_On_The_Spanish_War/0.html>.

⁷⁶ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990) 221-222.

⁷⁷ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 186.

Orwell's first opportunity to meet people affected by war when at the same time being one of them, experiencing the same fears and difficulties. He found out that even though people had to live in such a dangerous environment, they did not forget about solidarity. They had to put up with everyday fear of not having enough food, being killed, or imprisoned. Despite all these problems, they were not self-centred but willing to help those who needed it. For instance, he writes about how when he was lying in the hospital, two militiamen who came there, "as a way of demonstrating that they were sorry [he] was wounded, suddenly took all the tobacco out of their pockets, gave it to [him]" and he later found out that it was impossible to buy it and that "what they had given to [him] was a week's ration."⁷⁸ He also remembers an officer who could arrest Orwell as a former member of POUM militia, but instead, he "shook hands with [him]." He describes this moment as follows: "I do not know if I can bring home to you how deeply that action touched me. It sounds a small thing, but it was not."⁷⁹ Unlike the political leaders who would do anything to destroy their enemies, most of the ordinary people who did not take active part in politics, were able to rise above the situation as they were not interested in gaining power. Everyone including the men who fought in the war with guns in their hands treated anyone they met on the street as a person with the same worries. Therefore, anytime somebody needed help, they did not hesitate to do what was necessary and did not care that it was for example a person with distinct beliefs and values. The fact that there were persons who were interested in other people's problems even in such hard and dangerous times made an impression on Orwell, and gave him at least some hope for better tomorrows, although he knew that whoever would win the war, the future would not be bright. Orwell writes that if a system (referring to Communism) in which everyone with different opinions is destroyed was imposed, "it [would] be Fascism. Only, being operated by Communists and Liberals, it [would] be called something different."⁸⁰ But he was convinced that if there were still so many people with respect for others, who managed to support each other in these circumstances, there was a chance that one day in the future, the society would defeat all the despotic regimes. Then there would be times in which people would finally reach happiness and satisfaction. Despite all these hopes and dreams, he was still aware of

⁷⁸ George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 141.

⁷⁹ Orwell 177.

⁸⁰ George Orwell, "Spilling the Spanish Beans," *The Literature Network*. Accessed April 3, 2012 <<http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/893/>>.

the fact that such journey would not be easy, and there would be many undemocratic regimes that would place lots of obstacles in the path. “I myself believe (. . .) that the common man will win his fight sooner or later, but I want it to be sooner and not later — some time within the next hundred years, say, and not some time within the next ten thousand years”.⁸¹ With every sentence he wrote since the Spanish Civil War, he endeavoured to spread his opinions and warn people of potential threats represented by tyrannical governments in the hope of helping them realize the truth. Every book he published was written with the desire that one by one, people would read it and think about the possible consequences of letting someone control others. He knew that even if only several persons understood his warnings, it would be worth it. They could spread the word about their friends and relatives, and make them aware of the evil human power could bring about. He thought that together with others who would try to help to change the future, they could succeed in spreading the word all around the world. And maybe one day, the world would be a happy place to live in which people would not have to be scared of someone's power, or at least they would be wary of the possible threat and would not let anybody take safety and happiness from them.

⁸¹ George Orwell, "Looking Back on the Spanish War," *George Orwell*. Accessed April 3, 2012 <http://www.george-orwell.org/Looking_Back_On_The_Spanish_War/0.html>.

5. Conclusion

The thesis “The Influence of the Spanish Civil War on George Orwell and his Novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*“ aimed to show how significant the Spanish Civil War was for George Orwell's life and his future career. It was based on the book *Homage to Catalonia* and the essays “Looking Back on the Spanish War” and “Spilling the Spanish Beans” in which Orwell gives a detailed account of his experiences and of thoughts about the conflict in which he took part.

The first chapter described the situation in Western Europe in 1930s which was affected by great unemployment and social injustice as a consequence of an economic crisis. As people were dissatisfied with their living conditions, they decided to vote for those who promised them to improve their situation, and this enabled the rise of extreme ideologies like Fascism. When Hitler came to power, Great Britain and France did not attempt to prevent him from carrying out his plans about the invasion of Central European countries as they did not want to enter a war again. They let him occupy Czechoslovakia but when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 and broke a promise he made to these states, they declared war on Germany and in the end, they had to face World War II. This part was also concerned with the British literary Left in 1930s represented by George Orwell and the circle of poets around W. H. Auden. These authors reacted to the problems of their time – poverty, unemployment – and warned people of the danger of Fascism. They believed their works could contribute to a change in Europe. When World War II started, Auden concluded poetry cannot make things different, but Orwell unlike Auden continued believing in the power of literature until the end of his life.

The following chapter dealt with the issue of the Spanish Civil War in general, depicting the reasons which led to the conflict. It introduced the war as a fight between two main camps that faced each other – the Republicans longing for the change of Spain to a modern, democratic country, and the Nationalists who wanted to preserve traditional values. In the end, the latter managed to win the conflict in 1939 under the command of General Francisco Franco and thanks to the support of Germany and Italy. The dictatorship was installed and Spain suffered under Franco's rule for the next thirty six years.

The next part which related the Spanish Civil War to George Orwell stated that he came to Spain as a journalist, but because he realized Fascism represented a big threat not only to Spain but also to other European countries, he decided to fight against Franco's army instead. Even though Orwell's account of the war, as he himself admitted, might not be objective, it enables the reader to look into the conflict from an interesting perspective, a different one than he or she might know from most publications one can read about the war, through the eyes of a famous figure of the British literature. It provides the opportunity to gain insight into where did Orwell's opinions, as we know them from the two discussed novels, came from.

The main chapter was concerned with Orwell's experiences from the war. It described the most decisive moments which played a key part in the change of his opinions and in the creation of the novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The social injustice he witnessed in Barcelona bothered him but when he had the opportunity to fight by other soldier's side, he discovered that a society in which everybody is equal might exist in the future. The life at the front gave him the idea of the true values of life which one does not appreciate when living in comfort and peace because in this situation, people behave rather selfishly. He learnt that if there is a chance to improve your living conditions and defeat those who cause evil, one should never surrender and continue fighting. When he found himself close to death, he realized how quickly you can lose your life and that those in power do not care about the life of an individual whom they do not consider important. Even though he did not care about politics when he arrived in Spain, he soon discovered it was a mistake. He experienced the atmosphere full of fear and suspicion and became aware of the danger of absolute freedom, therefore, started to believe in democratic socialism. Orwell also emphasized that people should be concerned with political problems of other countries because regimes like Fascism spread quickly and if they exist, people are never safe. His inability to make himself understood in a foreign country helped him realize that it is very easy to take advantage of a person's ignorance. The Communist press showed him that the manipulation with people's minds by spreading lies signifies a big threat for humanity. However, he met so many generous and kind people that he started to be convinced that sooner or later, people will manage to defeat all the despotic regimes. After the war, he continued writing his works in the hope of making people aware of all these evils around us and thus trying to contribute to their doom.

The thesis proved that the Spanish Civil War had a great influence on Orwell's thinking and that many of his experiences from the conflict reflect in the two famous novels.

Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá vlivem španělské občanské války na jednoho z nejvýznamnějších britských autorů dvacátého století, George Orwella. Poskytuje detailní pohled do jeho zkušeností z tohoto konfliktu v Katalánsku, kde se po svém příjezdu jako novinář rozhodl bojovat proti fašismu. Shrnuje nejzásadnější faktory, které měly rozhodující vliv na změnu Orwellových názorů, od situace obyčejných lidí, přes jazykovou bariéru, až po komunistický tisk. Ukazuje, jak se všechny tyto zážitky promítají do pozdější tvorby, konkrétně ve dvou autorových stěžejních románech *Farma zvířat* a *1984*, čímž si klade za cíl doložit, že španělská občanská válka měla zásadní vliv na vznik těchto dvou děl.

První část práce poskytuje čtenáři pohled do západní Evropy třicátých let dvacátého století, v té době procházející obdobím velké hospodářské krize, která se rozšířila po celém světě v důsledku krachu burzy v New Yorku roku 1929. Přibližuje čtenáři tuto dekádu jako dobu, kdy došlo k ochromení průmyslové a zemědělské výroby a obchodu a tím pádem k obrovskému nárůstu nezaměstnanosti. Nespokojenost lidí umožnila nástup k moci ultraradikálním hnutím, jakým byl například fašismus. Jelikož v Německu bylo nejvíce lidí bez práce, podpořili ve volbách Národně socialistickou německou dělnickou stranu Adolfa Hitlera, který sliboval snížit nezaměstnanost. Roku 1933 se pod jeho vedením tato strana stává vůdčí stranou parlamentu a Hitlerovi se opravdu podaří snížit nezaměstnanost a zlepšit ekonomickou situaci Německa soustředěním se na zbrojní výrobu. Hitler věří, že Německo je předurčeno vládnout celé Evropě a postupně napadá okolní země. Západní Evropa uplatňuje takzvanou politiku appeasementu, čili ústupků vůči Německu. Je přesvědčena, že pokud přistoupí na Hitlerovy požadavky, vyhne se propuknutí druhé světové války, na kterou není připravena. Když však 1. září 1939 Hitler poruší slib, že nezaútočí na Polsko, vyhlásí Velká Británie společně s Francií Německu válku. Tyto země však nepodnikají žádné kroky k zastavení Hitlerových plánů, Německo napadá i západní Evropu a vstup do války se i pro ni stává nevyhnutelným. Poté práce představuje nejvýznačnější autory Velké Británie daného desetiletí, kteří se kloní k levicové politice, vyjadřují nespokojenost s podmínkami, v kterých jsou lidé nuceni žít. Reagují na chudobu, nezaměstnanost a varují před rozmáhajícím se fašismem, vyzývají k boji proti tomuto režimu. Mezi ně patří nejen

George Orwell, ale i okruh básníků kolem W. H. Audena. Tento básník ale na rozdíl od prvně jmenovaného autora po vítězství Frankovy armády ve Španělsku a začátku druhé světové války přestal věřit, že by jeho tvorba mohla něco změnit.

Dále se bakalářská práce věnuje situaci ve Španělsku těsně před samotným konfliktem, popisuje hlavní příčiny a vývoj občanské války mezi lety 1936 a 1939, kdy došlo k bojům mezi příznivci demokracie, kteří bojovali na straně republikánské vlády a byli podporováni Sovětským svazem, a fašismu, již byli vedeni generálem Franciskem Frankem pod záštitou Německa a Itálie. Republikáni chtěli ve Španělsku provést reformy, které by jej proměnily v moderní zemi, jelikož zemědělství bylo zaostalé a velká část obyvatelstva na venkově žila v chudobě. Nacionalisté vedení Frankem však nesouhlasili s plánovanými změnami a chtěli ve Španělsku zachovat tradiční hodnoty. Přestože vláda byla podporována jednotkami desítek tisíců dobrovolníků z různých koutů světa, tzv. Interbrigádami, nedokázala zabránit nástupu fašismu, protože Frankova strana byla mnohem lépe vybavena a důvodem byly také neshody mezi jednotlivými politickými stranami ve vládě, které se spíše soustředili na boj proti sobě než proti Frankovi. Španělsku tak po dobu přibližně třiceti šesti let vládla diktatura, během níž byli popraveni a vězněni odpůrci režimu a vše podléhalo přísné cenzuře. Období utiskování a nesvobody skončilo až roku 1975 Frankovou smrtí. Tato válka však neovlivnila pouze životy obyvatel Pyrenejského poloostrova, ale byla důležitá i pro mnoho významných osobností světové literatury včetně George Orwella.

Následující část zužuje téma španělské občanské války na její spojitost s Georgem Orwellem. Ten přišel na Pyrenejský poloostrov jako novinář, ale když viděl, jak silné základy v této zemi fašismus má, a uvědomil si, že představuje obrovské nebezpečí i pro další evropské země, kam by se mohl rozšířit, rozhodl se zúčastnit se konfliktu a riskovat svůj život v boji za lepší budoucnost nejen této pro něj cizí země, ale i dalších států. Přestože není jisté, zda je Orwellův popis války objektivní, jelikož on sám čtenáře varuje před svou možnou zaujatostí, jeho líčení války čtenáři poskytuje jedinečný pohled na konflikt, který jinak zná převážně z obecně podaných odborných článků, a pomáhá porozumět tomu, jak se pod vlivem těchto událostí změnilo Orwellovy názory na svět kolem něj, jak je známe z jeho slavných románů.

Hlavní kapitola práce se soustředí na výběr událostí z občanské války, které hrály klíčovou roli při formování Orwellových názorů. Jako podklad pro výběr nejdůležitějších zážitků posloužila kniha *Hold Katalánsku*, kde se Orwell vrací k

tomuto konfliktu, shrnuje své zkušenosti, dojmy, problémy, kterým musel čelit. Cílem práce je doložit, že španělská občanská válka zásadně ovlivnila jeho názory a prokázat spojitost mezi zážitky z války a jeho dvěma nejslavnějšími romány *Farma zvířat* a *1984*. Představuje čtenáři každodenní situace a problémy, s kterými se Orwell v Barceloně a v zákopech potýkal. Ve Španělsku se během války setkal s nerovnoprávností mezi jednotlivými sociálními vrstvami obyvatel, soucítil s problémy obyčejných lidí a utvrdil se v názoru, že socialismus je ideologie, která zajistí rovnost mezi lidmi. Když bojoval v zákopech s ostatními vojáky, ocitl se v prostředí, ve kterém neexistoval rozdíl mezi řadovými bojovníky a veliteli, kde s každým bylo jednáno jako se sobě rovným. Tyto zážitky mu daly naději v to, že jednoho dne by se lidé mohli dočkat beztřídní společnosti. Jako člen milice bojoval v zákopech hlavně se zimou a velkým nepohodlím, což mu pomohlo uvědomit si, co je v životě skutečně důležité a že zatímco lidé, kteří žijí v určitém komfortu, jsou sobečtí, ti, již se potýkají s obtížnou situací, jsou naopak skromní. Dále pochopil, že pokud stále existuje sebemenší naděje na úspěch v boji proti zlu, je třeba nevzdávat se a pokračovat v úsilí, jedině tak může člověk dosáhnout lepšího života. Teprve když ví, že nic nezmuže, je lepší se vzdát. Během bojů na frontě se ocitl blízko smrti, když byl postřelen do krku. Uvědomil si opravdovou hodnotu svého života a touhu zůstat na tomto světě. Díky pobytu v nemocnici přišel na to, že vládnoucí vrstvy nezajímá život jednotlivce. Politická situace v zemi v něm probudila nenávist nejen vůči komunismu, ale vůči všem nedemokratickým režimům. Ve Španělsku pocítil, co to znamená žít v atmosféře plné strachu a podezírání, když komunisté začali zatýkat nevinné lidi a ti pak trpěli ve vězení v nedůstojných podmínkách. Ve svých dílech proto začal varovat před hrozbou, jakou představuje absolutní svoboda, ve které si vládnoucí vrstvy mohou dělat, co se jim zlíbí. Jazyková bariéra a setkání s negramotnými Španěly Orwellovi ukázaly, jak snadno se dá zneužít lidské nevzdělanosti. Komunistický tisk se stal příkladem toho, že manipulovat s veřejným míněním pomocí lži je mnohem jednodušší, než si lidé uvědomují. Povaha lidí, s kterými se setkal, ho však přesvědčila o tom, že boj vůči těmto nedemokratickým režimům má smysl a že pokud stále existuje tolik lidí, kteří si dokáží pomáhat a chovat se k sobě slušně i v tak nebezpečné situaci, jakou je válka, člověk má naději jednou v budoucnu tento boj vyhrát.

Tato bakalářská práce prostřednictvím vybraných zážitků z Orwellových děl o španělské občanské válce, jejich analýzou a následným prokázáním spojitosti

s pozdější tvorbou ukázala, že Orwellova účast v jednom z nejzásadnějších evropských konfliktů dvacátého století měla bezpochyby rozhodující vliv na vývoj jeho názorů a že přímo ovlivnila jeho dva světově proslulé romány, ve kterých se odráží nejen samotné zážitky z tohoto konfliktu, ale i názory na politiku a člověka, které si vytvořil právě následkem situací, v nichž se ve Španělsku ocitl.

Abstract

The thesis explores the influence of the Spanish Civil War on George Orwell's opinions and his novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is based on the book *Homage to Catalonia* and the essays "Looking Back on the Spanish War" and "Spilling the Spanish Beans" in which Orwell describes his experiences and observations on the war from the time when he took part in the fights in the area of Barcelona. The thesis aims to demonstrate that this conflict played a key role in shaping Orwell's opinions and in writing of his two above mentioned novels. It focuses on the individual aspects of the war which influenced this British author the most and helped to form his opinions and themes for his future works.

Anotace

Bakalářská práce zkoumá vliv španělské občanské války na názory George Orwella a na jeho dva proslulé romány *Farma zvířat* a *1984*. Vychází z knihy *Hold Katalánsku* a esejí „Ohlédnutí za španělskou válkou“ a „Spilling the Spanish Beans“, ve kterých Orwell popisuje své zážitky a postřehy z doby, kdy se účastnil bojů v oblasti Barcelony. Cílem práce je dokázat, že tento konflikt hrál klíčovou roli při formování Orwellových názorů a při vzniku jeho dvou výše zmíněných románů. Detailně se zaměřuje na jednotlivé aspekty války, které tohoto britského autora nejvíce ovlivnily a pomohly tak utvořit jeho názory a náměty pro budoucí tvorbu.

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